

MARVIN (F.R.)

# Epidemic Delusions:

A LECTURE,

BY

FREDERIC R. MARVIN, M. D.

*Professor of Psychological Medicine and Medical Jurisprudence in the  
New York Free Medical College for Women.*

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## EPIDEMIC DELUSIONS.

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It seems to be the peculiar mission of modern science to demonstrate the permanency and universality of law; to drive from the universe the very thought of caprice, and to introduce inviolable harmony where was the wildest discord, rudest fancy, and merest fiction. To modern science nothing is more impossible than miracle, nothing more absurd than accident. The rational philosopher recognizes no causes but such as are reducible to law, and all causes are natural and immutable. He discovers the play of law, not only in the motion of a planet and the falling of an apple, but in the prevalence of a crime and the rise of a religion. All things have causes—all are in their turn causes, and governed by perfect and consistent law. The thoughts we think, the emotions we feel, and the acts we perform, are links in a chain no effort can break, and that will endure when we shall have crumbled into dust; and in our graves we shall still be governed by a law we obeyed before the cradle of infancy received us. There is no escape, no truce, no delay: science has torn the mask of fable from



the face of nature, and revealed the marvelous features that no skill may interpret.

In vain the student of nature explained the famine, the astronomer the eclipse, and the general the defeat. Men would have miracles, and when they could not find them they invented them. But science, who touched the fables of the past, and they vanished like empty vapor, who laid her finger on the miracles of the mediæval world, and they faded away like summer clouds in a twilight sky, is at work in this age, and many are the dreams she is dispelling, and many the visions she is dissolving.

Of all the delusions that have spread themselves over the earth, making and destroying the philosophies of the world, none are so thoroughly disintegrating as that of Moral Agency.\* From pole to pole, from zone to zone, all round our little planet, men have vainly imagined themselves their own Parcæ, the weavers of their own destiny. But the old dream of Moral Agency is over, and the philosopher now detects the working of natural law, as much in the rise of a religion or the growth of a crime, as in the revolution of the seasons and the flowing of the tides.

\* The author does not wish to deny that the phenomena of the universe are modified by human agencies, but he believes that nothing comes to pass without a process of natural law, however modifiable the law may be.

The modern historian seeks for law in the rise of a dynasty and the murder of a king ; the theologian finds in climatic causes the secret of a religion, and in the topography of a country the cause of a revival ; and the psychologist sees in the tides of crime that rise and fall, century after century—now overflowing the banks of civilization, and now receding almost from view—the working of natural laws that cannot be circumvented nor successfully resisted.

That moral and criminal epidemics have existed and still exist, no candid observer will deny. The seventeenth century in England and the eighteenth in France are strikingly illustrative of epidemic delusion. In both cases the entire national mind was shaken to its very foundation. In each there was a period of elegant but profligate literature, literature scintillant with wit, but utterly heartless. Then came a period of deep and anxious thought. The common people discussed the affairs of the kingdom, and openly criticised the Church. Then suddenly there came a period of reaction, a period of emotion : the masses not only thought, but felt, on questions of Church and State. Nothing stopped, nothing could have stopped, the onward waves of popular emotion. Resistlessly and furiously they rolled on, over all barriers, until, breaking in thunder against

the walls of the palace, they sent ruin and anarchy over the land. In both cases, after the restoration of peace, letters revived, and became not only immoral but profane. Then came two of the wildest commercial schemes the world has ever witnessed: in France, Law's Bank and Mississippi scheme, and in England, the South Sea scheme. Both schemes were invented the same year (1721), and at once both nations became utterly deranged over the merest bubbles, which, bursting, left thousands of families homeless and penniless. From the South Sea scheme alone nearly five hundred enterprises as worthless as their parent were generated, all of which were greedily swallowed by an entirely deranged people. So groundless were those enterprises that, at one sitting, a committee of the House of Commons pronounced eighty-six of them illegal. One enterprise, entitled "A Company for Carrying on an undertaking of great advantage, *but Nobody to know what it is!*" cleared for its founder £2000 in six hours, at the end of which time it utterly collapsed.

Nor need we go back a single century for illustration of the subject. Look in this age, and in this country, at Mormonism, with its thousands of saints assembled in the valley of Salt Lake. If ever a religion was established and a people



gathered, on a basis utterly shallow and fictitious, that religion was Mormonism, and that people the Latter Day Saints. And yet never was there a creed more enthusiastically embraced or bravely defended. Look for a moment at the origin of the faith. Joseph Smith, a man of prodigious personal magnetism, but an unscrupulous liar, an utter bankrupt and a murderer: this man, suddenly and with no reformation of character, became an interpreter of God's will to man, the inspired discoverer and translator of a book he had the audacity to call divine. On the word of this utterly abandoned and profligate man, and with no guaranty whatever of his sincerity, thousands deliberately forsook their religion, turned their backs on their native land, and followed the fortunes of the pretender to a new and western world. Living openly in relations absolutely licentious, and in a condition too indecent to be described, he yet pretended to such nearness to God as to be able to heal the sick and raise the dead. Yet, in the face of all these facts, his followers are numbered by thousands.

Look at the epidemics of homicide, infanticide, suicide and poisoning, which have at various periods visited the race. Such epidemics of homicide as occurred between 1588 and 1635. One epidemic alone swept from the earth seven of the

most distinguished characters in history, from William I., of Orange, to Wallenstein, including the Duke of Guise, Henry III., the last of the Valois Princes, Henry IV., the Duke of Buckingham, and Gustavus Adolphus: all were assassinated in a period of forty-seven years.

Look at the epidemics of infanticide, such an epidemic as occurred in Denmark not a century ago. Look at the epidemic of suicide twenty years ago in France. What reader of history has not paused, sickened and terrified over pages that chronicle the awful epidemics of crime and delusion that followed the plague of 1333, the fearful Black Death of the Middle Ages?

A word or two as to what is meant by the terms moral and criminal epidemics. Crime means violation of civil law; it may or may not be sinful, but is always illegal. Crime is one thing and sin another. Crime depends on civil law for its existence, and if there were no law there could be no crime, since crime is a violation of law, and non-existent law could not be spoken of as violated.

The Greek word "epidemic" means common to many people—seizing on many at the same time. The phrase "criminal epidemic," then, signifies crime seizing on many people at the same time. Morality I apprehend to consist in obedi-

ence to natural law, a violation of which may or may not be criminal. A moral epidemic, then, signifies vice seizing on many people at the same time. In the one case we have crime, and in the other vice, assuming an epidemic form.

To the infant world all things are wonderful, no more the constellations of heaven than the experiences of daily life. Before reason, judgment and volition have disciplined the mind and strengthened the understanding, all things are strange and mysterious. The infant mind is undeveloped; devoid of knowledge and judgment, it holds in its constitution the possibilities of both. Advancing years must develop and discipline the understanding, deepen the sulci, and enlarge the convolutions of the brain, and add knowledge to the mental store; and as knowledge arrives mystery departs, wonder sinks into abeyance, and neither longer dominate the world of thought. But now suppose the years bring to the mind few and feeble chances, and iron circumstances drive the soul through ways that are not Wisdom's. Suppose, as is the case with multitudes, that, conceived and born by accident, the infant mind first opens to the light of heaven in a circle where passion and ignorance contend for mastery. Suppose ignorance and passion are inherited and left to grow like weeds

in the mental soil. Judgment and reason fail to arrive, since the means to their end are neglected. The adult thus nurtured goes into the arena of daily life with the undeveloped intellect of a child, incapable of weighing facts, ignorant of causes, superstitious, with the organ of wonder large, prepared to believe the most monstrous doctrines, and to tremble before the simplest phenomena of nature. Thus are thousands thrust upon the world to fill prisons and hovels, and then perish like the brute. Such minds are the ready subjects of strong delusion, the victims of every new sensation in religion, and every new fashion in crime; converted at every revival, and fired at in every mob, they profess the dominant religion and are guilty of the reigning crime. At the mercy of their fears, at the beck of their passions, and without judgment to guide them, they break against every rock and plunge into every whirlpool.

Imagination continually endeavors to break the links which bind her to reason. Let her succeed, and there are no fictions, no strange beliefs, no remarkable delusions, no extravagant dreams, that she will not promulgate.

Take, as comparatively modern instances, such results as those caused by the preaching of Peter the Hermit, when not only immense troops



of men were driven, like autumn leaves before the wind, toward the Holy Land, on the wings of his incendiary breath, but even great hosts of children thronged to the sea-board to embark for the tomb of Jesus; and those produced by the efforts of Father Matthew against intemperance, when "all Ireland was wailing at his feet." These great excitements prove not only the power of personal magnetism over ignorant and unreflecting minds, but the intrinsic weakness of the uneducated intellect.

The mental and physical motions of the child are largely mechanical and automatic. Volition is a fruit of later years, that ripens not under the early sun of infancy. Nearly all the cries and contortions of the infant are but results of reflex action proceeding from the medulla oblongata. In the child, the cerebro-spinal system is reduced to its minimum, and the hemispheres are almost convolutionless. Its life is mostly confined to that series of ganglia whose nerves communicate with the involuntary muscles, and is called the organic system, since its office is to sustain animal life.

It is common to look upon infancy as a period of suffering; but the notion is a mistaken one, the truth being that the infant suffers less than the adult. Its cries, and groans, and contortions,

that pierce the maternal heart, have no more to do with pain than the swaying and moaning of a forest tree in a wind-storm. We have to grow into the region of pain, as we grow into other regions. We do not enter the world with nervous systems completely developed, any more than with digestive or secretive systems so developed. Every man starts at the beginning, and repeats in himself the history of his race. Now, a large part of the human race has not yet outgrown infancy : arriving at the years of manhood, it has failed to reach those of discretion. I use no figure of speech, but strictly adhere to truth, when I say that most of the movements of the majority of men are automatic, and that the automatical character of their movements becomes more and more apparent as we descend in the scale of mental culture. The mass of mankind, however accomplished in crime, are yet infants in intelligence.

Sympathy, "that wonderful instinct that links man to man in a social whole," and is at once the cradle of society and the grave of independence, is one of the most powerful sources of epidemic delusion. And following in its train, and not easily distinguishable from it, comes imitation, an instinct that, moderately indulged, contributes to health, excessively indulged, to disease, and that, when wholly ungoverned, becomes a mental

bondage: an instinct that, blindly obeyed, has crushed empires, obliterated tribes, depopulated cities, and spread sorrow and dismay over a continent. They who yield to its seductive influence, like sheep follow their leader over a precipice.

Psychological diseases have always been more or less epidemic, and, in a way, contagious. Carried by the subtle media, sympathy and imitation, the influence passes from individual to individual, affecting first those whose nervous excitability of temperament predisposes to the disorder, and then all who are in any way liable to its influence, until, sweeping over whole continents, it sinks every vestige of humanity in its troubled waters.

The instinct which prompts to imitation is seated in all minds, savage and civilized, ignorant and educated; but its most prominent parts are played in the lives of those whose acts are largely automatic, and whose intellects are undeveloped. A familiar example, and one with which you are all acquainted, is found in laughter, the contagious nature of which you cannot have failed to notice. People convulsed with laughter are often unable to assign a reason for their mirth: they laugh because others laugh. Observe children playing in the streets: one will start and run, and all will follow; one shouts, all shout; one strikes a play-mate, and a general fight ensues. They scarcely

know why they run, or shout, or fight, but they run, shout, and fight all the same. Their movements seem to be volitional, but are merely reflex—they seem to be dictated by the cerebrum, but are really produced by the medulla oblongata. I have noticed from public platforms that when one person leaves the lecture-room, like sheep, several follow ; when one wearies of the discourse, he communicates his sense of uneasiness to others, who annoy the lecturer by their uneasiness ; he coughs or yawns, and at once all who come within the range of his influence follow his example. It is mostly from epidemic imitation that military retreats and religious revivals derive existence.

“Crime,” says Dr. Elam, “propagates itself by infection, like fever and small-pox, and at times it seems as if the infection came abroad into the atmosphere, and exacted its tributes from every class and every district in the country. The laws of moral infection and the propagation of moral disorders are among the most recondite and difficult subjects of contemplation. There is something fearful in the very thought that man may so abdicate his moral freedom as to bring his will and moral nature under the sway of laws as imperious and resistless as those which sustain and balance the orbits of the stars. But we can not be blind to the fact. There is a large class



of minds over which great crimes exert a kind of fascination, and those who have never trained themselves to exercise the responsibilities of moral freedom are liable to become the victims of the strangest delusions, and catch readily at the moral infection which is always lurking, and sometimes raging, in the atmosphere of our world. Let a woman fling herself from the top of the Monument, and the gallery has to be railed in like a wild beast's cage, lest the contagion spread, and the Monument yard become the Tyburn of suicides."

My reason for devoting a lecture to the consideration of moral and criminal epidemics is that the subject is one of immediate and vital interest to the age in which we live. All around us, at home and abroad, for good and evil, the subtle laws are at work, and their invisible fingers forever weave the wondrous web of events; and it is the duty of students of science to understand those laws, detect their use, and guard against their abuse. The age in which we live is not free from epidemics of delusion and crime. I might instance religious enthusiasms, political excitements, and social frenzies: the rise of Spiritualism, the revival of Materialism, and the new impulse given to Socialism. With these you are familiar, and some of you will remember an excitement in

France which at this hour draws thousands from all parts of Europe to Lourdes, to worship the Virgin of Massabielle.

As a religious fanaticism, it is one of the most extraordinary that has been recorded in the history of this century, and can only be compared with the antique celebrations of past ages. It is a gigantic exodus, not only of voluntary pilgrims, but of several thousand priests, gathered from every part of France, around the famed grotto of Massabielle. From Paris, Bordeaux, Rheims, Lille, and a hundred towns, pours, day and night, through rain and heat, this strange throng of pilgrims. Some gnarled and knotted like strong trees that have wrestled with the winds of heaven for a century, resolute, determined, and fiercely enthusiastic. Faces in which there can be found no trace of tenderness, sympathy, or even humanity; and faces calm and pure and saintly, from whose luminous eyes the starlight of the spirit never fades away. There are children and women, old men who can scarcely stand, and the sick, that have to be carried, and the dead that died on the march and are borne on ambulances. Whither goes this mighty throng? To Lourdes. For what? To obtain through prayer the conversion and regeneration of France. Five hundred pilgrims pour into Lourdes, and, kneeling around

five different altars erected among the mountains, listen by day to the recitation of strange and terrific miracles from priests frenzied with excitement, and by night fill the woods for miles and miles with the tumultuous roar of their songs and chants, that goes up like the thunder of a cataract to mingle with the stars.

But what started so wild an excitement in one of the most civilized countries, and in this nineteenth century? One would naturally suppose nothing short of some great public calamity, a famine, a war, or a pestilence; but no! a little girl was seized with an ecstasy, and in a vision beheld Mary the Queen of Heaven. She told her story to the villagers, and at once the whole neighborhood was crazed with excitement.\* She experienced several attacks of hysteria, during one of which the Virgin conversed with her, and commanded her to appear before the civil authorities, and ask that on the rock on which she kneeled there should be erected a chapel. The authorities at first remonstrated with the Holy Virgin, complaining of the extravagance of the project, and pleading the poverty of the villagers, but in vain. And now, to the shame of France be it said, the church is being constructed on the rock.

The child (Barnadette Soubirons), who was by

\* *New York Herald*, Oct. 5, 1872.

no means an impostor, but an invalid, who should have been subjected to medical surveillance, has entered an institution as a Sister of Charity, while her parents are objects of bountiful benefaction.

These things were not done in secret. The pilgrimage to Lourdes was inaugurated in one of the grandest cathedrals in Europe, the Notre Dame des Victoires, in Paris. From this cathedral the pilgrims started at midnight, with flaming torches and lighted tapers, and for long, weary, rainy days thirty thousand of them moved in and out of the intricacies of mountain paths, singing psalms as they slowly advanced. It was like an immense galaxy of moving lights, and the scene from the valley below must have produced an indescribable effect.

Probably no single incident in the pilgrimage was better calculated to explain the fanaticism which originated and the emotional derangement which sustained the movement, than the processions formed in the public squares of Lourdes. One of them, over a mile long, contained more than forty thousand people, who, as they marched, sang hymns with one voice. It carried purple, violet, orange, blue and green banners, decorated with gold and silver and lace. These banners, numbering more than three hundred, represented all the Provinces of France. The banner of Alsace



and Lorraine was draped in black, and carried by girls in white. As it passed, the multitude pressed frantically forward, and kissed and caressed its hanging tassels, and some flung themselves against its folds of sable crape, and were borne along by the surging throng. The banner from Nantes was so covered with flowers and gold that six strong men could not more than support it, and the banners from Paris, Bordeaux, and Rheims were equally magnificent.

The pilgrimage to Paray-le-Monial far outstrips in political importance those undertaken to Lourdes and La Salette. The railway companies having reduced fifty per cent. the fares of the trains bound for that shrine, enabled pilgrims to flock there from all parts of the country. Several of M. Beulé's prefects took on this occasion a zealous initiation in stimulating the religious and political zeal of those under their governance who were susceptible of becoming votaries to the Saône-et-Loire Madonna. M. Belcastel and Count de Mon, and officers of MacMahon's staff, headed the pilgrim's trains which started from Paris. M. Ducros publicly patronized the Lyons committee charged to make known the special virtues of the image at Paray-le-Monial. In the mountainous Vivarais district, the *gardes champêtres* were employed to distribute pamphlets enjoining

the peasants to leave their flocks and herds to the guardianship of St. Margaret, she having promised the Virgin to take care of the goods and chattels of rustics going to Paray-le-Monial. The Mayor of an important town in Brittany says that on his way to Paris, he found the stations at Rennes and le Mans crowded with pilgrims. Gens. Charette and De Sonnis sent round—if one may be allowed to use so profane a term—the fiery cross to the Papal Zouaves in La Vendée and along the Loire. Their summons was enthusiastically obeyed; and these warriors were appointed by the Bishop of the diocese in which the shrine of Paray-le-Monial is situated to lay the banner of the Sacré Cœur, under which they had fought at Paray in 1870, beside the relics of Our Lady and St. Margaret. The *Assemblée Nationale*, in its glowing telegraphic account of the religious ceremonies, estimates the number of pilgrims present at 20,000. Another clerical journal gives the hymn in which this multitude, as with one voice, affirmed its political faith. You will be able to judge, from the subjoined translation, of the designs harbored by the promoters of this pilgrimage:

Royal Henry, Sovereign dear!

Return, we pray, to our relief;

Deign to lend a fav'ring ear

To Gallia in her hour of grief.

Without your aid our troubled land  
Must sink beneath the stranger's heel,  
Must perish by the Teuton's hand,  
That hand of hardest tempered steel.

Monsieur Thiers has failed to rouse  
Our martial ardor once so high ;  
To triumph where our foes carouse,  
Our Henry must to us draw nigh.\*

A correspondent of the *New York Times*, under date of July 26, 1873, says: "The pilgrimage of Paray-le-Monial was recently made by a large party of Deputies from the French National Assembly. These gentlemen journeyed from Paris with the utmost appearance of solemnity. They donned red crosses across their breasts. They bore a banner, on one side of which was a portrait of a man, representing Jesus, with the heart exposed, and the inscription: '*Cor Jesu in te sperantum salus.*' As they marched, they sang in loud tones the following hymn, which has a strange flavor of politics and piety combined :

Dieu de Clemence,  
O Dieu vainqueur !  
Sauvez Rome et la France,  
Par votre Sacré Cœur.' "

We speak boastingly of the civilization of this age, and the science of this century, and while we boast, we imitate the folly of the past, taking special care not to omit some of the most disgusting details. Five years have not elapsed since a

\* *London Daily News*, June 22, 1873.

little village in the centre of our own State became the Mecca of a remarkable pilgrimage. Toward it hundreds of not only the rude and illiterate, but elegant and cultivated, turned their footsteps. There were among them clergymen, lawyers, and even physicians. For what did these people, so varied in social standing and unlike in mental culture, go to the little village of Moravia? That they might look on the faces of their departed friends, and, what is if possible even more hideous, hear the phantoms speak, and see them move through the recesses of an old cupboard in a darkened room. A woman who was a victim to the excitement told me, with an emphasis of agony, that in the little village of Moravia, in an old rickety cupboard, at the command of a vulgar and illiterate woman, who was called the *medium*, her father, who came to his death years ago by suicide, exhibited himself with throat cut from ear to ear, and through lips dabbled with blood syllabled her name. And a gentleman of high character and irreproachable veracity assured me that he had seen and conversed with his deceased wife; and a skeptic who went to Moravia looked into that old cupboard, and came away convinced of immortality. Do not misunderstand me. I am not holding up these men and women to ridicule. They were sincere, and sincerity always entitles



its possessor to respect. They were intelligent and honest, and I mention their cases simply to show how easily the mind may be led astray and induced to adopt the most fantastic faiths.

In closing, let us for a moment consider the moral and hygienic means best adapted to the prevention of epidemic delusions. All may be named in three words that in themselves sound almost hopeless—the three words, **HEALTHY PUBLIC SENTIMENT**: a public sentiment which shall make epidemics of intellectual disorder impossible, by furnishing a moral soil in which superstition can find no root, and an atmosphere too bracing for the growth of intellectual derangements. Such remedy may seem impracticable, on account both of its costliness and vastness, but it is not impracticable: it has been tried again and again in given districts, and has succeeded when other things have failed. But the trouble with public sentiment is that it is evanescent and spasmodic, aroused more by immediate need than permanent conviction, but when aroused it is almost always successful. So soon as men ceased to believe in witchcraft, witches ceased to exist; a little ridicule and a great deal of general indifference accomplished in a few years what centuries of persecution failed to effect. So soon as the public ceased to think of Flagellants, the Flagellants ceased to whip themselves, and when we learn to

dismiss Spiritualism, the ghosts will go out like the flame of a candle. Whenever Rationalism and Science have overcome superstition and ignorance, epidemic delusions have disappeared.

I wish to make the subject of which I have treated personal. How will you assist in the production of such a public sentiment as shall make moral and criminal epidemics impossible? You will all contribute in your several capacities, but in general I may say that it is your duty to withhold your sympathy from all such movements as either result from superstition or contribute to its growth. Preserve a calm, intelligent and unwavering faith in Rational Science, and in whatever way opportunity may indicate, whether on the public platform, in the printed page, by the bed of sickness, or in the seclusion of private life, always teach, both by precept and example, a quiet frame of mind, self-control, and an unwavering faith in Science. It is to the young and growing Rationalism of this age that I look for the final abolition of both Spiritualism and Materialism, and for the introduction of a new system which shall neither attribute to the soul an existence it cannot have, nor to matter powers it does not possess; which shall neither kneel at the shrine of the spirit, nor bow before the altars of the flesh. Let it be your glory that you have contributed something toward its establishment.

## APPENDIX.

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The following works have been consulted in the preparation of this lecture :

A Physician's Problems, by Dr. Charles Elam.

Annales d'Hygiene Publique, by M. Marc.

Anatomy of Suicide, by Dr. Forbes Winslow.

Buchanan's Researches in Asia.

Christian Times, January 25, 1856.

Epidemic Delusions, by Dr. Carpenter.

Esquirol's Essay on Suicide, in the Dictionary des Sciences Medicales.

History of Persia, by Sir John Malcolm, vol i.

Hecker's Epidemics of the Middle Ages.

Lecky's History of European Morals.

Mackay's Memoirs of Extraordinary Popular Delusions.

Murder Considered as One of the Fine Arts, by Thomas De Quincey.

Secret Societies of the Middle Ages.

Von Hammer's History of the Assassins.

Wharton and Stillé's Medical Jurisprudence, 1873.

The following table of Epidemic Mental Diseases is from Chambers' Encyclopædia, vol. iv., p. 91, 1872 :

POPULAR NAMES.	FORM OF DIS- EASE.	YEAR.	NUMBER AFFECTED.	AUTHORITY.
St. Vitus—St. John's— Dance,	Chorea	1374	Hundreds	Hecker.
Wolf-Madness, .....	Lycanthropia	1523	"	Calmiel.
Possession .....	Demonomania	1642, etc.	"	"
Convulsionaries of St. Medard,	Theomania	1731	"	"
Incendiarism .....	Pyromania	1800	Many	Marc.
Witchcraft .....	Demonopathia	Various	Thousands	Various.
Suicide.....	Melancholia	"	"	Esquirol.
Visions.....	Delusions	"	"	{ Briere de, Boisemont
Timoria, Panic .....	Panphobia	1845	Many	Edin. Rev. 1849.

"Emotions which would not affect us when alone become overpowering when striking us in connection with others. Hysterical symptoms, when not promptly repressed, in times of general religious excitement, may in this way become epidemic. Dr. Davidson, in his history of the Presbyterian Church in Kentucky, gives us instances of this. Speaking of a period in East Tennessee, in which these manifestations were very injudiciously encouraged, he tells us that 'the subject was instantaneously seized with spasms or convulsions in every muscle, nerve and tendon. His head was jerked or thrown from side to side with such rapidity that it was impossible to distinguish his visage, and the most lively fears were entertained lest he should dislocate his neck or dash out his brains. His body partook of the same impulse, and was hurried on by jerks over every obstacle, fallen trunks of trees, or, in a church, over pews and benches, apparently to the most imminent danger of being bruised and mangled. It was useless to attempt to hold or restrain him, and the paroxysm was permitted gradually to exhaust itself. An additional motive for leaving him to himself was the superstitious notion that all attempt at restraint was resisting the Spirit of God.'" — Wharton and Stillé's Medical Jurisprudence, vol. i, p. 630.



“Most of the supposed cases of supernatural possession fall under this head. Take in addition to the above the following, which occurred in Kentucky in the movements of 1810-15. A man who was undoubtedly deranged, and who had in early life been a bold and enthusiastic hunter in the wilderness of which Western Kentucky was composed, became deeply impressed with a religious enthusiasm, which exhibited itself in the same way that all his other impulses exhibited themselves through the mechanism of the hunting mania. He became a sort of fanatical Der Freyschutz. In order to resist the devil, and make him flee, he contended that it was necessary to tree him, and to give him chase, just as we would a wolf whom we found prowling among our sheep. As the meetings he convoked were held in a grove, one of the congregation would suddenly start in pursuit of the devil, an exercise in which a number of others equally excitable would immediately join. This was called the “*running exercise*,” and became the first stage in the series of movements by which the meetings were afterwards made memorable. Climbing a tree after the devil was the next movement, which was called the “*climbing exercise*.” In the ecstasy of the moment, one individual was seized with a propensity to bark, a movement to which the rest were irresistibly impelled, though they used every effort to check the propensity. This exercise, which was called “*treeing the devil*,” was accompanied with such a scene of barking and jumping as to destroy any remaining appearance of reason. The epidemic spread to other fields than that of demon-hunting. On one occasion, one individual was seized with an insane propensity to play marbles during divine service, when others involuntarily joined him. And so far did the mania extend, that a series of other juvenile games were introduced and followed with the same irresistible vehemence by the congregation. Absurd as this may appear, the epidemic lasted for some months, and its history has now passed into the records of our Western States as part of the materials on which the annals of Western immigration will rest.”—*Ibidem*.

“ The instinct of Imitation is specially developed in persons of defective education or civilization. Savages copy quicker and better than Europeans. Like children, they have a natural faculty for mimicry, and cannot refrain from imitating everything they see. There is in their minds nothing to offset this tendency to imitation. Every well-constructed man has within himself a considerable reserve of ideas upon which to fall back ; this resource is wanting in the savage and in the child ; they live in all the occurrences which take place before them ; their life is bound up in what they see and hear ; they are the playthings of external influences. In civilized nations, persons without culture are in the like situation. Send a chambermaid and a philosopher into a country the language of which neither of them is acquainted with, and it is likely that the chambermaid will learn it before the philosopher. He has something else to do ; he can live with his own thoughts. As for her, if she cannot talk, she is undone. The instinct of imitation is in an inverse ratio to the power of mental abstraction.”— Fernand Papillon in *Popular Science Monthly*.

Select List of Books published and for sale by Asa K. Butts & Co.

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